

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6106

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 3670

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SP, XF

SUBJECT: SPANISH ARMS SALES TO ARAB COUNTRIES

REF STATE 124394

1. EMBOFF INFORMED PEREZ-MAURA OF MFA'S DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OF US DISAPPROVAL OF PROPOSED SALE OF 106MM TO IRAQ, DRAWING ON ARGUMENTS PROVIDED IN REFTEL. WHILE ACCEPTING US REFUSAL, PEREZ-MAURA MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS CONCERNING US POSITION ON IRAQI PROPOSAL AND SPANISH ARMS SALES TO MIDDLE EAST IN GENERAL.

A. GOS AWARE IRAQ DEPENDENTS ON SOVIETS FOR ARMS, BUT CONSIDERS THIS MORE AN ARGUMENT IN FAVOR SPANISH PROPOSAL, WHICH IN MODEST WAY WOULD HELP DIVERSIFY IRAQ'S ARMS SOURCES AND PRESERVE INFLUENCE THERE OF WESTERN-ORIENTED SPAIN.

B. BECAUSE OF CAREFULLY NURTURED RELATIONS WITH ARAB STATES, SPAIN ABLE TO SERVE US INTERESTS INTEREST IN MIDDLE EAST DURING DIFFICULT PERIOD AS MEDIATOR AND SPOKESMAN. SPAIN CANNOT MAINTAIN THESE GOOD RELATIONS WITH RHETORIC ALONE.

IT MUST BE ABLE TO DELIVER SOME TANGIBLE BENEFITS -- AS IN CASE OF ARMS DEAL WITH IRAQIS -- TO ARAB FRIENDS. US UNWILLINGNESS TO APPROVE SUCH ARRANGEMENTS AS SALE OF WEAPONS TO BAHREIN AND IRAQ OR F-5'S TO LIBYA PRESENTS DIFFICULTY FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS OF SPAIN'S ARAB POLICY.

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C. US SHOULD RECONSIDER DISAPPROVAL OF F-5 SALE TO

LIBYA. LIBYAN AMBASSADOR CONTINUES TO RAISE ISSUE, STRESSING POINT THAT, IF SPAIN TRULY HAS INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY AND FRIENDSHIP FOR LIBYA IT PROFESSES, IT WOULD FIND WAY TO SELL 10 F-5 TRAINERS REQUESTED. PROPOSED SALE IS POLITICALLY IMPORTANT TO SPAIN'S FOREIGN POLICY, THOUGH OF LIMITED COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE.

D. GOS HAS NOW RECEIVED INQUIRY FROM INDIA CONCERNING POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF UP TO 100 106MM RECOILESS RIFLES. GOS WOULD LIKE TO GIVE INDIANS PROMPT REPLY AND HOPES US WILL APPROVE SALE.

2. PEREZ-MAURA'S COMMENTS INDICATIVE OF GENERAL CONCERN WITHIN MINISTRY OVER CONFLICTING IMPERATIVES OF MEETING US REQUIREMENTS ON ARMS SALES AND KEEPING SPAIN'S FRIENDSHIP WITH ARABS CREDIBLE. GOS OFFICIAL CONSIDER IT HAS ALREADY BEEN DEMONSTRATED THAT SPAIN'S GOOD STANDING AMONG MORE RADICAL ARAB STATES HAS BEEN, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE, OF VALUE TO US. US SHOULD THEREFORE AT LEAST AVOID WHERE POSSIBLE RAISING OBSTACLES TO CONTINUATION OF THIS POLICY. VETO OF PROPOSED SALE TO IRAQ OF ITSELF NOT MAJOR BLOW. BUT FOR SPANISH IT IS ONE MORE ACT IN CUMULATE PROCESS THAT COMPLICATES THEIR MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY. PROPOSED SALE OF F-5'S TO LIBYA OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE TO SPANISH. THEY SEE US BAN AS SERIOUS IMPEDIMENT TO RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR CLOSER POLITICAL TIES WITH COUNTRY OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO THEIR INTEREST IN MAHGREB AND IN BROADER ARAB PICTURE.

3. REQUEST DEPARTMENT, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT FOREGOING POLITICAL FACTORS, PROVIDE EMBASSY ITS CURRENT THINKING ON SALE OF F-5 TRAINERS TO LIBYA. ALSO WOULD WELCOME EARLY RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT ON GOS PROPOSAL SELL 106'S TO INDIA.

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